Now, my supplementary is, since NACO has entered into an agreement with UNICEF...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You put your question.

SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: How much time has been stipulated for the agreement; and what amount is likely to be spent by the Government of India; and has any reputed NGO also been involved in the implementation of this programme?

Sir, some of the districts—namely, Guntur, Karimnagar, East Godavari, etc.—of Andhra Pradesh have been identified as high prevalence area of HIV/AIDS. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what steps have been taken to control HIV/AIDS in these districts.

DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS: Sir, a Memorandum of Understanding had been arrived between the UNICEF and the NACO on 09.11.2004 to get more global partners, who, in association with India, would like to check against HIV/AIDS. After this, the NACO as well as the UNICEF have been deliberating upon as to how wings could be spread out to reach other partners for this purpose. This is taking off, but it is taking off slowly.

So far as Andhra Pradesh is concerned, I do not have details right now. I would let the hon. Member know later on.

National Commission on Farmers

†*243. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:††

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Commission on Farmers headed by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan has initiated action to prepare reports on some of the fundamental issues affecting the lives and livelihood of farmers;

(b) if so, whether the Commission has decided to make primary reports of four priority areas such as 'farmers distress and suicides', 'causes and cures', "rainfed or dryland' and 'women farmers and the role of Panchayati Raj institutions';

(c) whether the Commission has already completed the study in this regard; and

†Starred Question Nos 243 and 254 were taken together.

††The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Dr T. Subbarami Reddy

(d) if so, by when a final decision for implementing the schemes prepared would be taken?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) The National Commission on Farmers headed by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan has submitted its first interim report which covers a number of issues concerning farmers and their livelihood. The Government of India has already taken a number of steps to address the four priority issues highlighted. Rural indebtedness, which is one of the primary factors behind the distress of farmers has been addressed by raising the volume of rural credit by 30 per cent during 2004-05. Rescheduling of loans, one time settlement have been the other interventions in this regard. The National Agriculture Insurance Scheme is being strengthened and made multi-pronged so as to provide an optimized safety net to farmers. Dryland farming has been identified as a key intervention in the Annual Plan of the Department of Agriculture for which 200 crores is being provided. For micro-irrigation, which will further optimize the benefits of dryland farming, another 400 crores has been provided. Rs. 630 crores is being provided for the National Horticulture Mission which will raise incomes, provide employment and help improve nutritional status in the rural areas which cumulatively will help ameliorate distress and promote welfare of farmers.

The issues concerning creation of legal rights for women in land and mainstreaming gender concern in agriculture is receiving Government's attention. The Union Budget has already mentioned measures to be taken for strengthening the ICDS programme and further enhancement of the nutritional and food security network are among Government's top most priority efforts.

The Ministry of Agriculture has taken on board the involvement of Panchayati Raj institutions in its initiatives to the extent possible. There is a provision for involvement of panchayat members in Watershed Committees. In many of the ATMA (Agricultural Technology Management Agency) districts, members of panchayats are involved in field extension activities.